

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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AMEMBASSY BERLIN
USMISSION BERLIN UNN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 864

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, UR
SUBJECT: BREZHNEV IN TULA: OTHER LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENTS

REF: (AVV) MOSCOW 835, (B) MOSCOW 630

SUMMARY: JUDGING FROM TELEVISION COVERAGE OF THE VISIT, BREZHNEV LOOKED TIRED UPON HIS ARRIVAL IN TULA JANUARY 17 (TO PRESENT THE CITY ITS EARLIER-ANNOUNCED HERO AWARD), BUT HE DELIVERED A LENGTHY SPEECH THE NEXT DAY WITH UNFLAGGING ENERGY AND RELATIVELY LITTLE SLURRING. THE DOMESTIC ASPECTS OF HIS SPEECH DEALT MAINLY WITH ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND PROBLEMS IN "IMPROVING THE LIFE OF WORKING PEOPLE." (THE SPEECH'S FOREIGN POLICY SECTION IS REPORTED REFTEL (A). IN OTHER DEVELOPMENTS, CONFIDENTIAL

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KOSYGIN'S SPEECH AT A JANUARY 17 COUNCIL OF MINISTERS SESSION (ON THE 1976 PLAN AND BUDGET) WAS GIVEN ONLY ONE SENTENCE IN JANUARY 18 PRAVDA. AS HAS BEEN RECENT PRACTICE, KIRILENKO "TOOK PART" IN THE SESSION EVEN THOUGH HE HAS NO FORMAL GOVERNMENTAL STANDING. AND WE HAVE HEARD A NEW THEORY ON WHY POLYANSKIY WAS OUSTED FROM THE POLITBURO. END

SUMMARY.

1. WE WERE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN BREZHNEV'S PERFORMANCE IN TULA IN LIGHT OF RECENT REPORT FROM THE ITALIAN EMBASSY THAT BREZHNEV DID NOT APPEAR TO THE VISITING ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER AND HIS PARTY TO BE IN TOP PHYSICAL FORM (MOSCOW 0630). EXTENSIVE TELEVISION COVERAGE OF BREZHNEV'S VISIT TO TULA -- TO CONFER UPON IT THE AWARD "HERO CITY" FOR ITS WARTIME FEATS -- GAVE US SOME BASIS FOR JUDGING HIS PHYSICAL CONDITION. THE OPINION OF OUR VETERAN "BREZHNEV-ON-TV" WATCHERS: LEONID IL'ICH LOOKED DRAWN AND TIRED, BUT HIS PHYSICAL MOVEMENTS APPEARED NORMAL AND HIS DELIVERY OF A LENGTHY SPEECH JANUARY 18 SEEMED ON A PAR WITH HIS STRONG PERFORMANCE AT THE 25TH CONGRESS. SPECIFICALLY:

-- THE TV CAMERA ZOOMED IN AS BREZHNEV STEPPED OF THE TRAIN INTO BRIGHT SUNSHINE IN TULA; HIS FACE LOOKED DEEPLY LINED, PUFFY AND WRINKLED AROUND THE EYES;

-- BUT HE SEEMED ENTIRELY AT EASE DURING THE TRAIN-SIDE GREETING CEREMONIES, AND RODE AWAY FROM THE STATION SEATED IN THE FRONT OF HIS ZIL, WITH THE WINDOW ROLLED DOWN;

-- LATER THAT DAY HE SEEMED RELAXED AND FULL
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OF ENERGY AS THE TV CAMERAS SHOWED HIM WALKING THROUGH A LOCAL FACTORY AND VISITING THE TOLSTOY MUSEUM AT JASNAYA POLYANA, ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TULA;

-- BUT THE REAL MOMENT OF TRUTH CAME WHEN BREZHNEV TOOK THE ROSTRUM TO DELIVER A MAJOR ADDRESS (CARRIED LIVE ON SOVIET RADIO AND TV, AS WELL AS ON THE "INTERVISION" NETWORK, COMMENCING SHORTLY BEFORE NOON JANUARY 18); HIS PERFORMANCE WAS AT LEAST AS STRONG AS DURING HIS REPORT TO THE 25TH CONGRESS. HIS DICTION WAS RELATIVELY CLEAR, HE SELDOM STUMBLED OVER LENGTHY WORDS, HE SEEMED IN FULL COMMAND OF HIS MATERIAL AND UNFLAGGINGLY ENERGETIC THROUGHOUT THE 75 MINUTE SPEECH.

3. ABOUT ONE-HALF OF THE SPEECH WAS DEVOTED TO FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND IS REPORTED SEPTEL. IN BRIEF,

THE SECTION ON DOMESTIC MATTERS:

-- STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF HIGH-QUALITY WORK AND PLUGGED THE RECENT CC/CM DECREE ON SOCIALIST ENUMLATION AS WELL AS THE CC PUBLIC LETTER ON AGRICULTURE;

-- SPOKE SOBERLY ABOUT PROBLEMS IN SUPPLY OF MEAT AND DAIRY PRODUCTS ("CONDITIONS ARE BEING CREATED FOR A NOTICEABLE IMPROVEMENT") AS WELL AS IN HOUSING, SCHOOOLS AND CONSUMER GOODS ("OUR REQUIREMENTS ARE OUTRUNNING OUR POSSIBILITIES," BUT INVESTMENT IN THESE AREAS IS STEADILY GROWING).

4. IN OTHER LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENTS, BREZHNEV'S DOMINATION OF SOVIET NEWS MEDIA WAS HIGHLIGHTED BY THE SCANT ATTENTION PAID TO THE FACT THAT KOSYGIN
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SPOKE AT A SESSION OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
JANUARY 17: KOSYGIN'S SPEECH RATED ONLY ONE SENTENCE IN PRAVDA'S JANUARY 18 ACCOUNT OF THE MEETING. THE ACCOUNT NOTED THAT, AS AT THE LAST MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, KIRILENKO TOOK PART (EVEN THOUGH HE IS NOT A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND INDEED HAS NO FORMAL GOVERNMENT POSITION). NEITHER OF THE TWO FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMEN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, MAZUROV AND TIKHONOV, WAS MENTIONED.

5. FINALLY, AN AUSTRALIAN BUSINESSMAN RECENTLY PASSED ALONG TO US THE FOLLOWING RUMOR, GIVEN THE AUSTRALIAN BY OFFICIAL SOVIET CONTACTS, CONCERNING POLYANSKIY'S OUSTER FROM THE POLITBURO. POLYANSKIY'S FALL REPORTEDLY WAS OCCASIONED BY HIS DECISION TO TO APPROVE HEAVY SLAUGHTER OF LIVESTOCK IN ORDER TO AVOID MASSIVE PURCHASES OF U.S. AND OTHER WESTERN FEED GRAINS. LEADERSHIP DISSATISFACTION OVER THE LONG-TERM NEGATIVE EFFECT UPON LIVESTOCK NUMBERS AND UPON THE SUPPLY OF MEAT AND DAIRY PRODUCTS WAS, ACCORDING TO THIS RUMOR, THE STRAW THAT BROKE POLYANSKIY'S POLITICAL BACK. (THE FACTS OF SOVIET LIVESTOCK SLAUGHTER AND FEED GRAIN PURCHASES AS WE UNDERSTAND THEM DO NOT SUPPORT THIS CRITICISM OF POLYANSKY, ALTHOUGH IT MAY BE THAT OUR SOURCE'S SOVIET CONTACTS FOUND POLYANSKIY A CON-
VENIENT SCAPEGOAT FOR CURRENT PROBLEMS WITH MEAT SUPPLY).TOON

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